



Newton Center pedestrians feel less safe

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Wicked Local Newton

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Newton — Pedestrians crossing the intersection of Beacon and Centre streets report that recent changes to the signaling have made the intersection more dangerous.

It used to be that when the pedestrian crossing button was pushed at this intersection, traffic would stop in all four directions.

Since June 26, the new pedestrian walk lights are timed so pedestrians cross parallel with the traffic, stopping traffic perpendicular to the pedestrian and allowing traffic in the other directions to continue, a design known as concurrent signaling.

Sandwich board signs were placed on the sidewalks to alert pedestrians to the change.

Readers report that some Beacon Street drivers are making left turns without regard for pedestrians in the crosswalk. The TAB went to the intersection and saw the same thing.

“The intent is to keep as much traffic going through that busy intersection as possible,” said Dave Turocy, Newton’s public works commissioner.

The project is the result of the increased traffic flow anticipated in this already congested intersection by the construction of the recently built mall in Chestnut Hill, called The Street.

Dorothea Hass, senior project manager for the pedestrian advocacy group, Walk Boston, said that her group often supports concurrent signalization because it shortens the pedestrian wait for traffic, but never at the expense of safety.

“I think this intersection is unsafe and the [designer’s] primary concern has been vehicular movement,” said Hass. “I’m shocked that they haven’t given more consideration to pedestrian safety.”

Hass said there are several ways to improve pedestrian safety at this intersection. The city could construct “bulbout” curb extensions which make pedestrians more visible, shorten the distance they have to cross, and slow vehicular traffic.

“They also need to tighten the curb radii at that intersection,” said Hass. Tighter curb radii force drivers to slow down to navigate a turn.

Hass said that installing a leading pedestrian indicator would give pedestrians a seven-second head start when crossing before the light turns for drivers.

“Or they could go back to the original signalization,” she said.

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